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ANNE BOYD: ANGKLUNG for solo piano
Faber Music Limited, FO113, 1976 (£1.00)
PETER SCULTHORPE: SUN MUSIC for voices and percussion
Faber Music Limited, FO172, 1976 (£0.80)

NEIL SORRELL

Those who expect Australian music to be nothing more nor less than émigré European music should consult an atlas. The fact that Japan and South East Asia are much closer than Europe (or America) helps explain why young Australian composers have become seriously involved with Asian music, along with the music of their Aboriginal compatriots, and used it as an antidote to an oppressive European influence. Thus a composer like Peter Sculthorpe (b. 1929) consciously moved from the technical complexities and aesthetics of 20th century European music via Copland and other 'straightforward' Americans to what he hopes will be accepted as something genuinely Australian. The series of pieces called *Sun Music*, for various combinations, mainly or-chestral, gives a good idea of his progress and mature style. The compositions date from the late 60s, and since then the interest in musical traditions nearer home has continued, as titles such as *Tabuh Tabuhan* and *Ketjak* (both from Balinese musical terminology) or *Koto Music* and the part for 'various ethnic instruments' in *Dream* testify.

Sun Music for voices and percussion (plus piano), first performed in 1966, makes use of the sonorities obtained from a chorus articulating isolated sounds, gong, cymbal, bass drum, tom-tom, bongos, maracas, guiro, sandblock and piano struck with various sticks and hands directly on the strings. It is fairly sparse, atmospheric music, lasting some nine minutes, with perhaps a hint of Balinese interlocking patterns in the 'con precisione' section. It is not a difficult piece and, now that it is readily available in score, deserves frequent performances.

Another deliberately simple piece, and one which shows a more overt Asian influence, is *Angklung* by Sculthorpe's younger compatriot, Anne Boyd (b. 1946). This is a piano piece for Roger

Anne Boyd

Angklung for piano solo

£ 1

Peter Sculthorpe

Sun Music for Voices and Percussion 80p

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Woodward, whose performances, I am told, reveal it as a delicately beautiful and successful miniature. *Angklung* is the name of a Javanese bamboo xylophone and also of the better-known (and somewhat curious) Javanese bamboo sliding rattle. In Bali the ensemble known as 'Gamelan Angklung' nowadays paradoxically uses percussion instruments other than the angklung. It is an eminently portable, even toy-like ensemble, and is usually limited to a four-note scale. I do not know exactly what Anne Boyd had in mind when naming her piece, but it is worth pointing out here that it restricts itself to four notes: B flat, A flat, E flat, and an F flat in one register only which may be retuned to a 'true' (untuned) F flat. Otherwise, the music has none of the vigour usually found in Javanese angklung music and none of the tone-quality of bamboo.

The piece is to be played as softly and as slowly as possible throughout. I find this kind of static music soothing and hypnotic rather than boring. Apart from the connection with South East Asian music — bearing in mind that Anne Boyd's angklung is a stylised one, as is the music she has written for it — there is some reminiscence of the New York 'process' composers. After smaller sections, which are separated by long-held notes and groups of rapidly-played notes, comes the long concluding section, with its sustained, slow crotchet pulse. This section grows from the oscillation between A flat and B flat (which began the whole piece), to which a repeated E flat and another oscillation, between F flat and E flat, are added. Thus the density gradually increases and then decreases as the music reverts to the A flat/B flat oscillation, dying away on a single B flat.